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Naval Postgraduate School Historical Highlights: Surrealist Night at Del Monte

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Historical Highlights

Surrealist Night at Del Monte, 1941

It was truly a surrealistic night at the Del Monte Hotel when artist Salvador Dali and his wife Gaia gave a benefit party. It was September 1941.

Dali, then visiting and working at the Hotel, was worried: artists fleeing the war in Europe were desperate for funds. "Who will want to miss a party Dali gives?" he wanted to know. "No one! ...We will startle everyone." Del Monte publicist Herbert Cerwin had charge of Dali's party-gear list, and startling it was: animal heads, mannequins (without heads), a tiger cub, 2,000 real trees, a wrecked car, two tons of newspaper, the largest bed in Hollywood, several interpretive dancers and a nude model. Cerwin found it all.

Attire was Dali-esque: guests were to "come in costume either as the materialization of a dream, a primitive animal, or one of the people of the forest". The setting: today's El Prado Room and hallways; the first course: fish served in genuine evening slippers. Thousands wanted in: the Vanderbilts, Hitchcocks and Sanfords were coming from New York; Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Ginger Rogers, Clark Gable, and other celebrities planned to take the train from Hollywood. Every media outlet of the day wanted in for newsreel footage. Did it really happen? It did. Did it raise any fund for the refugees? It didn't: unsurprisingly, expenses far outweighed profits, but what a night!

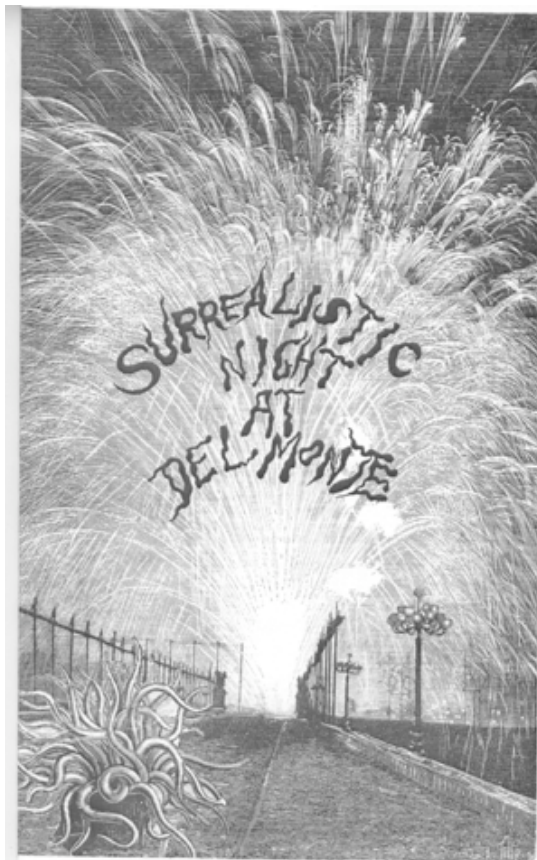
Next time you visit today's El Prado Dining Room for lunch, imagine the Surrealistic Night at Del Monte. And try not to think about that fish entree.

Photos and more about the El Prado Room:

<http://libguides.nps.edu/hoteldelmontetour/elpradoroom>

Sources: Historic Hotel Del Monte Tour Guide; El Prado Room.

<http://libguides.nps.edu/hoteldelmontetour/elpradoroom> Accessed 22 July 2016.





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Brophy, Robert. (1966) A Salvador Dali Party Extravaganza. Robinson Jeffers Newsletter, no. 100, Fall. <http://www.robinsonjeffersassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/RJN100.pdf>. Accessed 22 July 2016.

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